We Claim:

1 A nucleic acid sequence encoding a p63 cell regulatory protein, wherein said nucleic acid hybridizes under stringent conditions to a nucleic acid of SEQ ID Nos: 1-12, wherein said p63 cell regulatory protein binds a target DNA sequence.

Claim 2. A method for diagnosing malignant carcinomas, comprising:
(a) obtaining a biopsy sample of tissue;
(b) determining the level of a p63 gene product in said sample;
(c) comparing the level of said p63 gene product in said biopsy sample with the level of said p63 gene product in a control sample of cells;
wherein a decrease in the level of said p63 gene product is indicative of malignant carcinomas in said biopsy sample.

Claim 3. A method of claim 2, wherein said malignant carcinoma is carcinoma of the cervix, breast, salivary gland and/or prostate gland.

Claim 4. A method of claim 2, wherein said control sample is selected from the group comprising basal epithelial cells, immature squamous cells, ME 180 and human foreskin keratinocytes.

Claim 5. A method of claim 2, wherein the level of said p63 gene product is determined by a method selected from the group comprising RT-PCR, immunoblotting, immunoprecipitation, and sandwich immunoassay.

Claim 6. A method for detecting the onset of cancer in tissues containing sub-columnar reserve cells, comprising:
(a) obtaining a biopsy sample of said tissue;
(b) determining the level of a p63 gene product in said sample;
(c) comparing the level of said p63 gene product in said biopsy sample with the level of said p63 gene product in a control sample of cells;

wherein a decrease in the level of said p63 gene product is indicative of the onset of cancer in said tissues.

Claim 7. A method of claim 6, wherein said tissue containing sub-columnar reserve cells is selected from the group comprising cervical tissue, breast tissue, and/or prostate gland tissue.

Claim 8. A method of claim 6, wherein said tissue containing sub-columnar reserve cells is selected from the group comprising kidney, testis, adrenal gland, brain, spleen, and thymus.

Claim 9. A method of claim 6, wherein said control sample is selected from the group comprising basal epithelial cells, immature squamous cells, ME 180 and human foreskin keratinocytes.

Claim 10. A method for distinguishing cervical squamous carcinoma from cervical small cell undifferentiated carcinoma, comprising:

(a) obtaining a biopsy sample of tissue;

(b) determining the level of a p63 gene product in said sample;

(c) comparing the level of said p63 gene product in said biopsy sample with the level of said p63 gene product in a control sample of cells;

wherein a decrease in the level of said p63 gene product is indicative of small cell undifferentiated carcinoma.

Claim 11. A kit for diagnosing malignant carcinoma comprising:

(a) a sample collecting means; and

(b) a p63 PCR primer pair.

Claim 12. A kit of claim 11, wherein said primer pair is selected from the group comprising TAp63-specific primer pair and a ΔNp63-specific primer pair.

Claim 13. A kit for diagnosing malignant carcinoma comprising a p63 specific antibody.

Claim 14. A kit of claim 13, wherein said antibody is selected from the group comprising a TAp63-specific antibody and a ΔNp63-specific antibody.